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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MARKING 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF REESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENCE OF ARMENIA

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, today marks the 15th anniversary of the reestablishment of the independence of the Republic of Armenia. On behalf of the tens of thousands of Armenia Americans in my district, the largest Armenia community outside of Armenia, "Oorakh Angakhootyan Or," congratulations to the people of Armenia on a decade and a half of freedom.

Building upon the foundations of the first Armenian Republic of 1918, today's Armenia has, in the years since it declared its independence from the disintegrating Soviet Union in 1991, strengthened democracy and the rule of law, promoted free-market reforms, and sought a just and lasting peace in a troubled region.

With America's help, Armenia is overcoming the brutal legacy of Ottoman persecution, Soviet oppression, Azerbaijani aggression against Karabagh, and the ongoing dual blockades by Turkey and its allies in Baku.

Recognizing this progress, John Evans, the former U.S. Ambassador, said in 2004, that "Armenia now has well-founded hopes for a prosperous and democratic future."

I am proud of the role that the United States Congress has played in strengthening the enduring bond between the American and Armenian peoples. This special relationship is rooted in our shared values and experiences over the course of more than a century. Among these shared values are a commitment to democracy, tolerance, religious freedom, human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In the 1890s, Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, traveled to Armenia to help the Armenian victims of massacres being perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish Government.

In 1915, as the Ottoman Empire began its campaign of genocide against the Armenian people, the U.S. Ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, documented and, at the risk of his own career, protested the ongoing massacres, death marches and other barbarities.

Later, President Woodrow Wilson led the formation of the Near East Relief Foundation to help the survivors of the

Armenian genocide, and spearheaded the international efforts to secure justice for the Armenian people and to support the first Republic of Armenia.

Later, after the short-lived Republic of Armenia was annexed by the Soviet Union, Armenians here in America and around the world were key allies in our decades-long struggle against the Soviet threat to freedom. This cooperation contributed to bringing an end to the Soviet Union, to the rebirth of an independent Armenia, and to the democracy movement and self-determination of Karabagh.

Armenia has made tremendous progress in building up a free-market-oriented economy over the past decade and a half. According to the Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal Index of Economic Freedom, Armenia is consistently ranked as a free economy, and is currently the 27th freest in the index's 2006 rankings.

Recognizing this, the United States has named Armenia as one of only a handful of countries to have qualified for assistance through the Millennium Challenge Account, a program which targets development assistance to countries that rule justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom.

Armenia has also sought to integrate itself in the world economy as a member of the World Trade Organization, and I was pleased to join many of my colleagues in working to extend the Permanent Normal Trade Relations status to Armenia.

Armenia's economic accomplishments are more extraordinary when you factor in the crippling and illegal economic blockades imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan. The blockades cost Armenia an estimated \$720 million a year and have forced more than 800,000 Armenians, close to a quarter of Armenia's population, to leave their homeland over the past decade.

The biggest challenge Armenia faces is the hostility of its neighbors. While the primary threat from Turkey is economic and diplomatic, Azerbaijan has been far more bellicose. Both Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh have demonstrated their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Karabagh conflict through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In contrast, Azerbaijan has taken reckless steps that have contributed to instability in a region of strategic and economic importance.

Armenia's Soviet past and the economic and security challenges it faces have impeded the country's progress towards full democracy and the rule of law. Those of us who care deeply about Armenia and the Armenian people must continue to help Armenia to perfect its institutions and expand the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, nobody knows the need for broad engagement with Armenia more than the Armenian-American community, which has strong ties to its ancestral homeland. Armenian

Americans have made contributions to every aspect of American life. From investor Kirk Kerkorian to Ray Damadian, inventor of Magnetic Resonance Imaging, to the multiplatinum rock band System of a Down, Armenian-Americans have enriched our Nation. They are also committed to contributing to an ever brighter future for Armenia. I have been privileged to work with many of the community on ending this government's tragic failure to recognize the Armenian genocide, on ending the Turkish and Azerbaijani economic blockade, on securing aid to Armenia, and securing permanent normal trade relations with Armenia.

Armenia has come a long way in 15 short years, and I look forward to much more progress in the years ahead.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OUTLAW OF THE UNDERGROUND

Mr. POE. Request permission to take Mr. BURTON's time and speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, it is said that justice is the one thing that you should always find. And hopefully we will find justice soon. Just a few days ago in South Carolina, on an afternoon like every afternoon throughout America, school buses take children home, and this particular school bus dropped off a 14-year-old girl named Elizabeth near her home so she could walk through this rural place where she lived.

Soon after getting off the school bus, though, she came in contact with a local villain. His name is Vincent Filyaw, 37 years old. He started talking to Elizabeth. He kidnapped her. He took her to the woods. He was posing as a police officer. And after he finally walked her around so she could be disoriented about where she was, he took her to a hole in the ground, 15 feet deep, where he kept her for 10 days.

In this hole in the ground, the cover of it was a piece of plywood. Down in this hole he had a camp stove, he had another hole dug for a toilet, he had a shelf and some dirty cooking utensils. It looked like an underground outhouse. I have seen photographs of it.

This was Elizabeth's dark dungeon of depravity for 10 days. He had booby-trapped this hole in the ground so that when he was gone, and if she tried to leave, it would blow up and kill her.

When he was there, he abused her. He abused her as much as he wished. He had weapons. He had homemade grenades to protect himself from the police if they ever found him. It is hard